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Volume 5, Issue 1

# The American Embassy Newsletter

Embassy of the United States of America to Lithuania

## Special Features:

- Message from  
Ambassador  
John Cloud
- Update on Avian  
Influenza

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## Message from Ambassador John Cloud

I had the pleasure to accompany President Adamkus in his visit to Washington in February. President Adamkus had an excellent discussion with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Speaker of the House Pelosi, Senator Durbin, and Congressman Shimkus. President Adamkus also met with Secretary of Energy Bodman and Secretary of Homeland Security Chertoff. Conversations centered on our cooperation in fighting the Global War on Terrorism. President Bush thanked President Adamkus for Lithuania's decision to deploy its Special Forces to Afghanistan.

There was also discussion of Lithuania's eligibility for the Visa Waiver Program. President Bush and Secretary Chertoff briefed the Lithuanian delegation on the current status of the Administration's efforts to amend the Visa Waiver Program to make it easier for countries like Lithuania to qualify. I was impressed with the close and collegial nature of all of these discussions, which reinforced the close alliance between our two countries.

I am also happy to report that President Adamkus awarded my predecessor, Ambassador Steve Mull, the Commander's Cross.

During the past month, Consul James Fellows and I have had several conversations with government officials here concerning the impact of the recent court decision on Lithuanian citizenship and dual nationality. We have particularly raised concerns about the effect on minor children who may have claims to both Lithuanian and American citizenship. The Lithuanian Government has formed a working group to look at this overall issue. I have shared the U.S. Government's concerns in writing with the working group.

This month is U.S. Culture Month. During this period, the Embassy will be hosting a number of cultural events in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipeda. We've included a schedule of the events on page six. We hope to see you at these events.

Mary and I have now been in Lithuania for seven months. We have enjoyed the opportunity to meet many of you. I look forward to seeing you at our next Town Meeting.

-- Ambassador John Cloud

## News from the Consular Section

### *Update on Immigrant Visa Processing*

U.S. Embassy Vilnius can once again accept I-130 immediate relative immigrant petitions from American Citizens residing in Lithuania for at least the past six months.

As of January 22, 2007, consular offices abroad were instructed not to accept immigrant visa petitions because consular officers lacked the means to perform the criminal background checks on American citizen petitioners required by the Adam Walsh Act.

Subsequently, the Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) worked to develop a mechanism whereby USCIS will perform the required "Adam Walsh Act checks" for any petitions received abroad by consular officers.

Therefore, effective immediately, we may accept immigrant petitions from American citizens who reside in Lithuania for their immediate relatives (spouses, parents and minor children).

We will also accept petitions from non-residents in true emergency cases, such as life and death or health and safety, and others determined to be in the national interest. Examples of family emergency include minor children who would be unexpectedly left without a caretaker. Please keep in mind that the immigrant visa process is not quick.

To demonstrate residency in a consular district, the American Citizen petitioners must be able to show that they have permission to reside in the consular district and that they have been doing so continuously for at least six months before filing the petition. Individuals who are in the country on a temporary status, such as student or tourist, would not be considered to meet the residency standard.

All lawful permanent residents and American citizens resident in the United States, or with a permanent address in the United States, should file I-130 petitions at the USCIS Service Center having jurisdiction over their place of residence (as indicated on the USCIS website:

<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-130.pdf>).

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*Please encourage any American Citizens living in Lithuania to register with the Consular Section.*

*They can do this online at <http://travelregistration.state.gov>*



### ***Update on Avian Influenza***

Avian influenza or the “bird flu” has been in the news on and off for years. While the latest World Health Organization report does not show any confirmed human cases of avian influenza in our immediate neighborhood, it has been discovered in birds within our region.

It is only prudent to be ready for the possibility that we may face avian influenza or another pandemic flu here. Reprinted below is the current guidance from the Department of State on preparing to deal with potential outbreaks anywhere in the world.

### ***How to prepare for "Sheltering in Place"***

Health professionals are concerned that the continued spread of a highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) virus among animals in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe has the potential to significantly threaten human health. If a virus such as H5N1 mutates and spreads easily from one person to another, avian influenza may break out globally. While there are **no reports of sustained human-to-human transmission** of avian influenza, the U.S. government and international health agencies are preparing for a possible pandemic.

Depending on the severity of a pandemic, commercial airlines might drastically curtail or even cease operations. Travel restrictions could also impede people from returning to the United States or fleeing to other countries. For these reasons, it may make more sense to **“shelter-in-place”** (i.e., stay home and practice “social distancing” to avoid contagion) for an appropriate period of time.

**American Citizens Abroad:** Due to varying conditions overseas, **Americans abroad** should evaluate their situation and prepare emergency supplies accordingly (non-perishable food, potable water, medicines, etc.) for the possibility of **sheltering-in-place** for **at least two and up to twelve weeks**. Water purification techniques such as boiling, filtering and/or adding chlorine to locally available rainwater, swimming pools, lakes, rivers and wells may replace the need to store large quantities of water.

**What can you do on a daily basis?** Cover your cough. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to eradicate viruses **and** bacteria or apply a hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol content when soap and water are not available. Stay home if you are sick. Vaccinate yourself against seasonal flu.

**Travel:** American citizens living in or traveling to countries with human or animal cases of H5N1 virus should consider the **potential risks**. Keep informed of the latest medical guidance and practical information and plan accordingly. Consult [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for the latest tips on international travel.

**On-Line Resources:** Detailed information about suggested preparations, as well as planning checklists, are available on the U.S. government’s one-stop web site on pandemic influenza ([www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)), also the World Health Organization ([www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/)) and the Centers for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) websites.

## Information You Need to Know About Traveling

### Abroad from Lithuania with Minor Children

Lithuanian law requires parents who wish to leave the country with their minor children, if the parents are not traveling together, to have a consent letter signed by the other parent. Lithuanian authorities are enforcing this requirement on all residents of Lithuania, whether or not they hold Lithuanian passports. Minor children traveling alone are also required to present a letter from their parents authorizing them to travel abroad. This requirement does not apply to foreign tourists who are in Lithuania temporarily. According to the State Border Guard Service, the relevant law on this matter has changed several times over the years and is not very well known. We will be discussing this issue soon with Lithuanian government authorities, but wanted to advise you now of what we know about the requirements.

In order for a parent to be able to travel alone with a minor child, s/he must present a notarized letter signed by the parent that is not accompanying the child on the trip. The parent that is not traveling must give permission in this document for the child to travel with the other parent. The parents' marital status is not relevant. The State Border Guard Service will keep a copy of this letter when the child passes through passport control.

For foreigners, the permission should be drawn up in the parents' native language and then translated into Lithuanian by a licensed translator. Some American citizens resident in Lithuania have gone through this process, and report that the fee for a translator is approximately 40 LTL per hour. The translator must accompany the parents to a notary's office, and the entire process can take up to two hours of the translator's time. Notarized copies of the original cost approximately 8 LTL.

Such permission can be valid for up to two years from the day it is notarized, rather than simply for a specific trip. For this reason, it may be most convenient to have several copies drawn up instead of having to return to a notary each time the child will be traveling with only one parent. Some parents have chosen to execute letters giving broad permission for the child to travel alone, thereby removing the need for a parent to give permission for the child to travel with the other parent. Others have had letters drawn up for each parent giving the other permission to travel with the child.

#### **American Citizens and Notarial Services**

##### **No appointment necessary**

Telephone number **+370-5-2665500, +370-5-2665600**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday **1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Friday **9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

## **The New American Center**

We are pleased to announce that the new American Center has opened its doors. We are now located at Akmenų 7, on the grounds of the American Embassy.

The American Center, a part of the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania, officially opened to the public in 1994. For over twelve years, the American Center has worked to bring the very best of America to the people of Lithuania. Through a variety of cultural and academic programs, the American Center's goal has always been to promote greater mutual understanding between U.S. and Lithuanian societies.

The American Center houses a full-service public library, provides information to the news media, and manages cultural and academic exchange programs.

The library is a welcoming place for those who want to learn about the USA. The library has books and videos on American literature, science, history, politics and art. The Center also has subscriptions to over 50 U.S. periodicals and electronic news databases. The library has Internet terminals for the use of library visitors.

The American Center also provides information on educational exchange programs and study opportunities in the United States, such as Fulbright scholarships for professors and graduate students.

The library is now open daily to the public from 10am to 5pm. We look forward to providing the same library services, cultural events, and educational products that have made the American Center a gateway to American culture for over twelve years and counting.

## **Calendar Items**

### **Next American Citizen Town Hall Meeting – May 12, 2007**

Holiday Closures at the Embassy:

April 9 – Easter Monday

April 10 – Easter Holiday

May 1– International Labor Day

May 28– Memorial Day

June 25– St. John's Day

## News from the Public Affairs Section

April is American Culture Month. American cultural events will be taking place across the country in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda. The programs will include film screenings, concerts, dance performances and a photo exhibition.

**For more information about this month's events, please call 266 5300.**

- March 30, 4:00pm    Exhibition Opening: "American Roadside Architecture"**  
Venue: Europos Centras Mall  
(Display on second floor, opening ceremony on first floor)  
*Exhibition will be on display until April 30.*
- April 4, 4:00pm        Film Screening: "Good Night, and Good Luck"**  
Venue: American Center
- April 18, 6:00pm      Concert "American Classical Songs"**  
Dr. Egle Perkumaitė  
Natalija Katiliene  
Jurate Rudzianskaite  
Venue: American Center
- April 21, 7:00pm      Modern dance performance with wind orchestra**  
**Gabriela Lena Frank "Requiem for a Magical America"**  
Partners: Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy  
Wind Orchestra "Trinitas"  
Prof. Patrick Suzeau (Kansas University, Fulbright scholar)  
Dr. John Lynch (Kansas University)  
Venue: Russian Drama Theater, Vilnius
- April 22, 7:00pm      Modern dance performance with wind orchestra**  
**Gabriela Lena Frank "Requiem for a Magical America"**  
Partners: Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy"  
Wind Orchestra "Trinitas"  
Prof. Patrick Suzeau (Kansas University, Fulbright scholar)  
Dr. John Lynch (Kansas University)  
Venue: Kaunas Musical Theater

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Public Affairs Section  
(PAS) e-mail & website:

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www.vilnius.usembassy.gov

## U.S. Embassy

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://vilnius.usembassy.gov/>

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## About Our Organization...

The United States' principle objectives in Lithuania are:

- ☐ **Regional Stability:** The Mission has no greater goal than working with Lithuania in maximizing our common contribution promoting freedom and security in the world. Above all, this means an active bilateral partnership to make sure that Lithuania gets the assistance it needs to carry out cutting-edge NATO missions, such as its Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. We will also work with Lithuania as it develops niche capabilities that enable its small military to contribute to NATO. Finally, we will encourage Lithuania to continue to serve as an advocate of and role model for pro-democracy forces throughout the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.
- ☐ **Closer Economic Ties:** Although there are many areas of cooperation, U.S. trade and investment volumes here lag behind several of Lithuania's European partners. To improve the situation, we are enlisting the government and resident U.S. firms in a campaign to seek more American involvement in this dynamic economy.
- ☐ **Democracy:** We are proud of U.S. support for Lithuania's extraordinary success in establishing a strong and vibrant democracy. We will continue those efforts by speaking out in defense of civil society, tolerance, and public probity, and reinforcing those words when possible with training resources.
- ☐ **Law Enforcement:** Lithuania and the United States share a common interest in combating international crime and terrorism. We will seek to increase the pace of joint operations between U.S. and Lithuanian law enforcement agencies; expand training initiatives with law enforcement officials and the judiciary; and accelerate the pace of extraditions between our two countries.
- ☐ **Homeland Security:** We seek to uphold U.S. immigration law while ensuring that all qualified Lithuanians have the visas they need to visit our country. In particular, we want to ensure that young Lithuanians, the country's future leaders, continue to travel, study, and work legally in the United States. We will also press the government to liberalize bureaucratic requirements imposed on American residents here.